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[SELECTED FOR THE "JOURNAL," BY A LADY.]  
From the Old Fellows' Offering  
BY T. H. MATTISON.

Late in the afternoon of a sultry day in the latter part of August, 18—, a middle-aged man, weary and dusty with travel, paused at the door of a farmhouse in the suburbs of the little village of S. Over his shoulder, suspended by a staff, he bore a bundle of extraordinary capacity, and led by the hand a child, sweet, blue-eyed, and curly-haired, the picture of a girl, of some six or seven years. A fresh matronly woman was standing in the door, when they made their appearance, and as their footsteps seemed bent toward her threshold, she smiled upon them as if in welcome. Emboldened by this evidence of cordiality, the man ventured to ask her, in modest phrase, for a cup of water, and to be kind to him.

Of course she would, and ran with alacrity to bring it. After offering it to the little girl, who drank sparingly, the man placed the cup to his lips, and inhaled a long, deep draught. His thirst was evidently intense, for he never paused from the moment he raised the cup till he had drained it of its refreshing contents; and he set it down, only drops of sweat, like great glass beads, upon his forehead.

"Could he be permitted to rest a moment at the door, himself and his little girl?"

"Of course!" he said, and she was welcome to all the hospitalities of the house; and with a cheerful smile she entreated them to enter, and repose themselves as long as they pleased.

The man, who had been seated upon the doorstep, rose to avail himself of the proffered kindness, when he was observed to falter and turn pale. The kind mistress of the cottage stepped forward, took him by the arm, and led him gently forward, followed by the child. When they had entered the house he grew paler still, and leaned more heavily still upon the arm by which he was supported. He made an effort to speak—extended his hands as if he were groping for something in the dark—the next moment he fell upon the floor. He was dead.

The poor child was too young to comprehend the appalling nature of the calamity, but an indefinite dread stole into her heart, and she shuddered and wrung her hands in affliction.

The husband of the hospitable mistress of the mansion soon after came in, examined the man as he still lay on the floor—for the poor woman was amazed at the suddenness of the event that she had not stirred from the moment of the fall—and started at once in search of a physician. He came, but of course, his search was fruitless. In due time a coroner's jury was summoned, who rendered their verdict, "death by drinking cold water." Two days after, the man was followed to his grave by a few kind-hearted villagers, and the young child as the only mourner. She looked down into the grave, as the coffin was lowered to its place, then wisely into the faces of those around her, and clung affrightedly to the kind woman who had been the instant cause of her father's death.

"Dust to dust," and the earth rattled dolefully upon the coffin-lid—shutting out, forever, the last look of the last friend the child had on earth—except those whom God, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, had already provided for her.

She was adopted into the family of the good man whose threshold her father had passed out of life to eternity. But her father's death, and the manner of it? There is no impiety in believing that Providence does sometimes lead the unfortunate, by inscrutable means, when they are abroad upon the dangerous paths of life.

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Adversity, like the lead, though ugly and venomous, still bears within its lead a precious jewel. My own employments were of such a character as to

engross the greater share of my time and attention. In addition to this I had involved myself in embarrassments, by becoming security for a near friend, and my ingenuity and industry were largely taxed to prevent absolute ruin. For all these manifold perplexities your mother had no sympathy, and could not understand why they should prey upon my mind, or why they should in any way impede my progress. I was a man of the world, and I was in the habit of indulging. She was discontented and restless, under the partial restraint I was compelled to exercise in my expenditures, and the amount of time I was obliged to devote to affairs of business—on account of which she was left to seek her own sources of amusement.

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"Darn his picture," growled Dick. "His whip didn't hurt me much until he knocked me down, when I thought Satan himself had struck me."

"Who thought the old man so strong?" cried Ned. "Who thought the old fellow could run so?" retorted Charley.

Harvey listened to this conversation, and much to the same effect, until Frank, who had not the consolation of thinking he had eaten a single peach, started off telling his companions that if they wanted the bag, which they had left under the tree, they might go and get it, provided old Newcomb had not already taken care of it. They declined going for it, but withdrew from the field of their defeat almost, leaving Harvey to laugh at the joke, and to enjoy himself on the peaches he found already collected in the bag. Having satisfied his appetite on the delicious fruit, he left the bag and the remaining contents for the old man and quietly walked home.

Ned Harvey intended to keep the affair to himself, fearing the revenge of his companions, but when the deacon reported that he had found a bag full of peaches under one of his trees, and talked of the trespass in such a way that the trespassers knew that he had nothing to do with flogging them so soundly, their suspicions rested at once on Ned Harvey. Finding this to be the case, Ned immediately proclaimed the joke all about the neighborhood, and related the whole affair with such exaggerations, as served to show up his comrades in the most ridiculous light possible.

The traitors were emphatically "used up." The ridicule was worse than the punishment they suffered, and everybody twitted them; and even the old deacon, forgiving them the peaches they had eaten, chuckled over the rich joke of "Robbing a Peach Orchard."

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"Darn his picture," growled Dick. "His whip didn't hurt me much until he knocked me down, when I thought Satan himself had struck me."

"Who thought the old man so strong?" cried Ned. "Who thought the old fellow could run so?" retorted Charley.

Harvey listened to this conversation, and much to the same effect, until Frank, who had not the consolation of thinking he had eaten a single peach, started off telling his companions that if they wanted the bag, which they had left under the tree, they might go and get it, provided old Newcomb had not already taken care of it. They declined going for it, but withdrew from the field of their defeat almost, leaving Harvey to laugh at the joke, and to enjoy himself on the peaches he found already collected in the bag. Having satisfied his appetite on the delicious fruit, he left the bag and the remaining contents for the old man and quietly walked home.

Ned Harvey intended to keep the affair to himself, fearing the revenge of his companions, but when the deacon reported that he had found a bag full of peaches under one of his trees, and talked of the trespass in such a way that the trespassers knew that he had nothing to do with flogging them so soundly, their suspicions rested at once on Ned Harvey. Finding this to be the case, Ned immediately proclaimed the joke all about the neighborhood, and related the whole affair with such exaggerations, as served to show up his comrades in the most ridiculous light possible.

The traitors were emphatically "used up." The ridicule was worse than the punishment they suffered, and everybody twitted them; and even the old deacon, forgiving them the peaches they had eaten, chuckled over the rich joke of "Robbing a Peach Orchard."

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